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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5143

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/SINGH/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/18/2026

TAGS: PREL PTER MOPS PARM SY LE

SUBJECT: DEFMIN MURR WORRIED ABOUT PALESTINIANS PROVOKING ISRAEL

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) On 8/18, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Elias Murr told the Ambassador that he was deeply worried by intelligence information suggesting that Palestinian rejectionists planned to disrupt the ongoing LAF deployment to the south. While he had nothing specific, he analyzed from putting disparate pieces of information together that Syria wanted the PFLP-GC or other Syrian-funded Palestinians in order to launch a rocket attack against Israel now, before LAF deployment concluded and before the expansion of UNIFIL took place.

¶2. (S) The Syrian-Palestinian rejectionist goal, Murr said, is clear: provoke Israel into attacking GOL institutions, now that "we are responsible for the south," and give any potential troop contributors cold feet about joining UNIFIL. Thus, UNIFIL-plus never happens. In Murr's view, a Palestinian attack might occur quite quickly, while the LAF was still feeling its way through the south. "Israel will destroy the army," he fretted, talking about Israeli retaliation. "That's what Bashar wants. Destroy the army now, before it is ready to take action."

¶3. (S) Murr speculated that Syria is particularly eager that the Palestinians move now, because the Syrians are "furious" about a second quiet LAF deployment that intentionally was done away from the public spotlight but which the Syrians have noticed: as part of the GOL's implementation of UNSCR 1701's arms smuggling provisions, Murr claimed to have ordered the deployment of 7,000 LAF soldiers to the Syrian-Lebanese border, on top of the token 500 soldiers who were there already. According to Murr, 4,000 of these troops have already deployed to the border, infuriating the Syrians. (PM Siniora told us separately about this development. We do not have independent confirmation yet of the assertion by the PM and DefMin that there are now 4,500 LAF troops on the Syrian-Lebanese border, but it would be good news if true.)

¶4. (S) The Ambassador told Murr that everyone knew all along that there was a danger that the Palestinian rejectionists would try to destroy the cessation of hostilities and disrupt the implementation of UNSCR 1701. The Ambassador argued that this is exactly why having some kind of ongoing communication between the LAF and IDF via UNIFIL was so important. The Ambassador urged Murr to use the UN now to pass to the IDF its concerns and to use the next IDF-UNIFIL-LAF coordination session on Sunday to go over how to address this kind of danger. "I hope we have until Sunday," Murr said.

FELTMAN